Cooperative Processing Centers for Public Libraries

PETER HIATT

COOPERATIVE PROCESSING CENTERS are increasingly considered an important solution to many problems facing the library profession today. Public library leadership in the United States is striving to reach adequate standards of service. Geographically, some areas remain unserved by any level of library service. Using the *Public Library Service* standards as a measure, the *National Inventory of Library Needs* told us that to meet minimum standards in 1963, public libraries needed an additional 6,378 professional librarians, expenditures of $438.9 million above 1962 operating expenditures, and $472 million for books.[1] At the same time, public libraries are being called upon to meet new and special demands. Changes in educational philosophy are creating greater and more diversified student use of public libraries, while the continuing rise in the educational level of adults is increasing both the amount and the sophistication of their library use. The pressure for rapid dissemination of information is challenging the profession at one end of the spectrum, while service to the culturally disadvantaged and the physically handicapped tests professional ingenuity, imagination and flexibility at the other.

The personnel shortage long faced by the library profession shows no signs of abatement. That our leadership is concerned with the possible misuse of currently employed librarians is emphasized by the 1967 ALA Conference's central theme of "Manpower Utilization." Many suspect that trained, often highly trained, technical services personnel are not properly utilized. Book production has grown from 15,000 new titles and editions in 1960 to 28,500 in 1964.[2] The current dollar estimate for processing the materials needed to bridge the gap

Peter Hiatt is Associate Professor of Library Science, Indiana University, and Public Library Consultant, Indiana State Library.

between present holdings and minimum standards is $343.7 million.[1] The need to avoid duplication of public library processing activities has most recently been given substance in the *Minimum Standards for Public Library Systems, 1966:* "Supportive services for the system should be organized for the greatest economy and efficiency, and should include . . . access to centralized cataloging and preparation of materials." [3]

This chapter attempts to survey United States public library attitudes and activities in cooperative technical services. One of the sources of confusion in surveying and discussing this area has been the lack of an accepted definition of shared cataloging activities.

Definition. The public library is fairly unusual in not being part of a parent institution. This fact makes the problem of defining cooperative processing at once more complex and more necessary. What is a processing center? Despite Pierce Butler's pleas, our profession is still pragmatically rather than theoretically oriented. It follows that we librarians will find ways to share the processing of materials whenever we feel it necessary, and will find labels and definitions later. Meanwhile, however, we are talking among ourselves about the subject and trying to convince those outside the library profession.

In discussion, we are less apt to erect unnecessary barriers if we start with common accurate vocabulary. When, for example, is cataloging *not* centralized? Is the Library of Congress' distribution of catalog cards centralized cataloging? To what extent must the preparation of the physical books be handled, in order for a center to qualify as a processing center? What about the terms "cooperative" and "centralized" technical services? Is "centralized" not redundant when "cooperative" is used? Is the problem one simply of definition and not of concept? Centralized processing has prospered, usually happily, under several different names. These names use potentially hackle-raising words such as "cooperative," "regional," "state," and "central." Some of the more commonly used terms and their definitions need to be examined. One definition states:

> Centralized processing may be considered to be those steps whereby library materials for several independent libraries, either by contract or informal agreement, are ordered, cataloged, and physically prepared for use by library patrons, these operations being performed in one location with billing, packing and distribution to these same libraries.[4]

This definition is inadequate for two reasons. It excludes library sys-

tems such as the large public library which centralizes the processing procedures for its departments and branches. Secondly, it requires that *all* operations be handled centrally for the definition to be applied. Probably the very term "centralized processing" is too generally applicable to be appropriate to the situations which we wish to identify.

In 1966 ALA's Regional Processing Committee (Resources and Technical Services Division) struggled with a title for its "Guidelines" which are designed for use by cooperative processing centers. They decided on "Guidelines for Centralized Technical Services." The "Guidelines" define a technical services center as "an agency ordering, receiving, cataloging, and preparing materials, for two or more libraries."[5] This definition, in being more specific, seems closer to an adequate working definition.

Library Statistics: A Handbook of Concepts, Definitions, and Terminology offers the following pertinent terms and definitions:

> Centralized processing—"The ordering of books, preparation of catalog records, and physical preparation of books in one library or a central agency for all libraries of a system (or area).[6]
> Cooperative system—"A group of independent and autonomous libraries banded together by informal or formal agreements or contracts which stipulate the common services to be planned and coordinated by the directors of the cooperative system."[7]
> Cooperative services—"The common services planned and coordinated by a cooperative system."[7]

These current definitions seem to combine all the essential elements.

The guess is that most of the definitions put forth in ALA's *Library Statistics* will find increasing acceptance, and, at least for the immediate future, will be increasingly reflected in current practice. Working with these definitions, the next step would be to examine the range of activities found in cooperative processing centers in the 1960's.

A processing center can offer the following technical services: it can supply catalog cards only; select books for member libraries; order books; and process books, i.e., fully prepare the book with cards and markings. It is apparent that the potential range of activities in a cooperative processing center is great, but in most centers today, it ordinarily includes ordering, cataloging and classification, and the physical preparation of the items.

With these activities in mind, then, the term which seems best to

delimit and yet include these essential elements of current practice is "cooperative processing centers." It is possible to find this redundant, yet the term includes the necessary elements of "independent and autonomous libraries banded together" informally or formally[7] for "the ordering of books, preparation of catalog records, and physical preparation of books. . . ."[6] It is worth noting that in 1953 Lucile Morsch apparently found the words "cooperative" and "centralized" non-redundant for her chapter, "Cooperation and Centralization," in *Library Trends.*[8]

History. The urgency of concern for cooperative processing is recent; many suggestions for coping with the problems of personnel shortage and extension of service have long been with us. In fact, the ill-fated Cataloging-in-Source experiment of the late 1950's seemingly was more than a gleam in Melvil Dewey's eye even in 1885, for he said then:

> . . . many an eloquent essay has been written of the enormous saving that will be effected, when the book will be cataloged once for all as a part of its publication, no more leaving each of the 1,000 libraries that buy it to go through all the processes, than leaving each to make his copy of the work itself as the monks copied their Bibles before the invention of printing.[9]

Cooperative or centralized processing in one form or another is not a new idea. The idea can be dated back to at least 1850 when Charles Jewett suggested that his Smithsonian Institution Library act as a center for library cooperative activities including cooperative cataloging. A search through *Library Literature* and *Cannon's Bibliography of Library Economy* indicates that some interest in public library cooperative, centralized or shared technical services has been continuously evident for a long time, but the greatest emphasis has been in the period beginning with 1950 with over two-thirds of the citations appearing since that time.

Librarians have long talked and written about cooperative and centralized processing. The literature is abundant. Prior to 1956, however, word seems to have been translated into deed only occasionally. As early as 1893 the idea of printed card distribution appeared in the literature: "Central card cataloging—i.e., the issue of satisfactory printed catalog cards to libraries from a central office—has long been recognized as one of the greatest needs of latter-day library work."[10] The Library of Congress has produced catalog cards for libraries of all types since 1901. The H. W. Wilson Company has been supplying

commercial catalog card service since 1938. Libraries serving single political units have usually centralized their technical services. Centralized processing in probably more common among public library systems than among other types of libraries. In the 1960's, however, it is still possible to find examples of large public libraries which have not entirely centralized their processing.

Examples of independent libraries working together at some aspect of centralized processing are far more recent. Georgia, in 1944, became the first state to have centralized catalog card distribution. The Georgia Library Association formally requested the service, and the State Cataloging Service of the Georgia State Department of Education started the production and distribution of catalog cards for titles purchased with state funds. The service is paid for by state aid funds to public libraries. In 1948, the Watertown (New York) Regional Library Service Center was set up under the auspices of the New York State Library; centralized processing for member libraries was included in its activities. The Sheboygan (Wisconsin) Public Library has been selling processing services to several of the small surrounding public libraries since the late 1940's. A few other examples of large public library centers processing by contract (with their beginning dates) are: Rochester (New York) Public Library, 1953; the Clinton-Essex-Franklin (New York) Public Library, 1954; Salinas and Monterey County (California) Libraries, 1954; and Wayne County (Michigan) Library System, 1956. In 1950 Erie County, New York began cooperative processing. In 1953 Monroe County, New York (since joined with Rochester Public Library's processing system) undertook the same step; and in 1954 the Fort Loudon (Texas) Regional Library System began its service to several county libraries.

Since the early 1950's the South Carolina State Library has been processing books for libraries lacking professional personnel. The Arkansas Library Commission has offered catalog cards, book pockets and cards at cost since 1954 to all public libraries requesting them. Kentucky's Department of Libraries inaugurated centralized processing in 1954. In 1956 the Missouri State Library implemented an earlier recommendation of the Missouri Libraries Planning Committee by offering catalog cards at cost to Missouri public libraries.

The compilation of a complete census of cooperative public library processing centers has been attempted at least three times. James Hunt's initial list in 1961 was the best available for several years.[11] More recently the Regional Processing Committee of ALA's Resources

and Technical Services Division[12] and Sarah K. Vann[13] have published similar lists. Both requested advice concerning corrections and additions, but even though no response was received it should not be assumed that their lists are complete. The question of definition, again, is part of the problem. Several libraries responding to the Regional Processing Committee's questionnaire thought they did not qualify as regional processing centers (the term used in the committee's questionnaire); the committee agreed, however, that two of them should indeed be so recorded. The listings cited here identified more than sixty public library cooperative processing centers in operation in 1966.

The basic concept of the 1956 *Public Library Service* standards is that quality public library service requires large library systems. Even though librarians had long maintained this view, it was not until the Library Services Act of 1956 that funds were made available on a grand enough scale to permit massive action. *Public Library Service* clearly stated the systems concept; L. S. A. gave Federal recognition and funds to develop systems. Among the early L. S. A. projects were cooperative efforts in technical services.

In 1956 one of the currently existing cooperative processing centers came into being;[12] in 1957 and 1958, eight were established; and in 1959–1960, eighteen. More public library regional processing centers have been established since 1958 than in the previous seventy-five years. The twelve years from 1955 to the present have seen the dream of cooperative processing become a reality.

The Current Scene: Survey of Practices in the 1960's. It is not possible to put together a detailed, clear description of the status of cooperative processing centers. Perhaps this fact is significant in itself. Sarah K. Vann's survey in 1966, conducted as part of her study for the Free Library of Philadelphia, and the survey by ALA's Regional Processing Committee, offer the most reliable information. While neither source is complete, together they offer a picture, if a somewhat imperfect one.

In 1965-66, sixty-three cooperative processing centers were identified.[12] The following nineteen states, however, are without at least one center: Alabama, Alaska, Connecticut, Delaware, Idaho, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Jersey, North Dakota, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, and Washington. (Delaware, it should be noted, participates in the Eastern Shore Book Processing Center in Maryland.) Califor-

nia, Hawaii, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Texas and Wyoming each offer state-wide service from the state library agency, and Georgia, Michigan, and New Hampshire offer card service.

While most public libraries do not yet avail themselves of such opportunities, many do. The spring 1966 survey of ALA's Regional Processing Committee makes this clear. Approximately 2,000 independent public libraries belong to regional processing centers. (This is a minimum figure. Some centers reported that a system of libraries, e.g., a county library system, counts as "one.") Including state library processing, the typical regional processing center serves thirty-six libraries. The median number of member libraries served by a regional processing center is thirty.

Annual budgets for operating expenses range from $4,000 to $450,000. The mean is $142,200 per year. The average cost per volume processed (at best a misleading figure and in this survey only a rough estimate) is $1.41, and the average number of volumes processed per year is 56,900 (approximately 9,000 titles). Most of the centers, as of 1965–66, processed only for public libraries, but nine included school libraries and six centers process for colleges. Most employ card catalogs, but two issue book catalogs. All but ten offer a full range of processing, from the simple ordering of books to the delivery of books ready for shelving. The various means of funding cooperative processing include contract, Federal subsidy, per-book charge, and ratio of individual library income to center operation cost.

The equipment used in these centers ranges from a Univac 1004 (one center), to the minimal tools needed to purchase LC and Wilson cards (three centers). Multilith is used by thirty, photoduplication equipment by twenty-three, and Addressograph equipment by eleven. Although seven centers were using Flexowriters in 1965, eleven employed typewriters, and eleven made use of mimeograph equipment. Other mechanical aids such as conveyor belts were in use, but the questionnaire was not sufficiently detailed to elicit full information.

The Cooperative Processing Center: A Profile.[13] The difficulty of adequately delineating a typical cooperative processing center is made clear by the information presented by Miss Vann elsewhere in this issue. However, several classic descriptions ought to be cited; all are now dated, and a visitor to each center would notice changes. The Southwest Missouri Library Service in Bolivar, Missouri, has provided the operational pattern for many centers established later. Organized in the fall of 1957 with ten member libraries—the number

had grown to fourteen by 1966—the center is supported by fees paid by the members based on a ratio between their respective budgets and the center's total budget. The operating budget in the first year of operation was $10,000; the 1966-67 operating budget is $38,000. It operates on a nonprofit basis. The original members were two city libraries (serving populations of 38,700 and 66,700), three regional libraries (37,000; 45,700; and 33,800), and five county libraries (18,000; 12,400; 38,100; 23,800 and 8,800).

From the start, Southwest Missouri has used an Elliott Addressing Machine for printing cards. Its other equipment includes electric and manual typewriters, stencil and card storage cabinets, an adding machine, book trucks, book pocket bins, a numbering machine, a pasting machine, filing cabinets, and a mimeograph. The processing procedure equates with that of a relatively efficient public library system's technical services department. Each library in the Southwest Missouri Library Service system places its order with the jobber or publisher, using identical forms. A copy of the order form is sent to the center, which either prepares a new catalog card stencil or attaches the order slip to a stencil made previously. Original cataloging is kept to a minimum and LC proof sheets are used for preparing catalog entries. Non-book items are not processed, but catalog cards are prepared for such materials as films and recordings.

When the books arrive at the center and orders have been verified, book pockets are glued in and title pages are stamped to show ownership. Catalog cards are put with the books, which are then placed on each library's delivery shelf. Unlike the practice of some centers, lettering and plastic covers are handled at the recipient library. In 1966, the Missouri State Library took over the operation of another cooperative processing center, the Missouri Library Services Center, and a recommendation has been made to incorporate the Southwest Missouri Center into a state-wide processing service.

Current Trends and Problems. Several important trends in the 1960's are affecting cooperative processing centers. In a very recent survey of automation in American libraries, Harrison Bryan observes that "the dominant impression is not of the automation that there was, but of the great number of places where it was not. . . . I think that there are rather more librarians in America with very little intention of hastening at all [the automation of libraries] than one might expect from the literature."[14] Although Bryan's investigation was limited to university library practices, his observations probably reflect the

public libraries' attitudes toward automation as well. Several public libraries have been investigating the feasibility of automation for cooperative processing centers. The Library of Congress' Project MARC (Machine Readable Catalog) is being tested on a trial basis in sixteen libraries across the nation; one school system and one public library system are included among them.

The Nassau County (New York) Public Library has accepted MARC tapes and indicated willingness to expand their use when appropriate; it processes a quarter of a million volumes each year for fifty member libraries. Since this center deals with approximately 20,000 titles a year, almost all of them English language, it is likely to find Project MARC especially suitable. Of course, it is difficult to predict with confidence whether or not LC magnetic-tape catalog data, taking into account their costs and their present limitations of scope (no non-English titles, no serials, etc.), will prove sufficiently advantageous to replace the less expensive and nearly as prompt proof sheets. In the mid-sixties Project MARC has many implications, basic among which is the potential of machine-produced, automated, Federal cataloging for the nation's libraries.

Meanwhile, public library cooperative processing centers have themselves been concerned with the mechanization of current operations. Most of them turn out an acceptable product at reasonable cost with a minimum of equipment. Several public library systems (e.g., King County, Washington, and Los Angeles County, California) have gone further than most in mechanizing processing procedures, perhaps pointing the way for other cooperative centers. Thus far, the cooperative centers, less tightly structured administratively, have done less in the way of mechanization. However, Xerox, Thermofax copiers, Flexowriters, multilith, ditto and Addressograph are all widely represented in existing centers.[15]

The administration of Library Services and Construction Act funds by state library agencies has furthered another important development: state and Federal professional leadership. It is entirely possible that this leadership will do more in the long run to change attitudes toward cooperation among independent units than have the so-far disappointing demonstration projects and direct infusion of funds.

Another trend, which as yet does not seem to have affected independent libraries involved in processing centers, is the shift some libraries are making from Dewey Decimal Classification to Library

of Congress Classification. No center has reported such a shift, and the Nassau County (New York) Public Library Processing Center has registered an intent to remain with Dewey Classification even though its participation in Project MARC presents an opportunity to change.

Several other trends have immediate implications for public library cooperative processing centers. Many book jobbers and publishers have begun to offer cards with books, and at least one publisher is currently investigating Cataloging-in-Source. Such partial cataloging should be acceptable to processing centers, but at present there seems no likelihood that such service will become available on a large enough scale to offer the independent public library better service than it can now receive from membership in a processing center.

Commercial processing centers seem to this author a reasonable alternative to cooperative processing, and a panel of practicing experts [16] at the 1966 New York ALA Convention stated that they considered the choice only a practical one of cost, speed, and quality.

Economic pressure from without, as well as the long-held philosophy within the profession, has increasingly encouraged cross-type library cooperation. Several of the public library cooperative processing centers offer their services to school libraries. At least two process materials for junior college libraries.

Nelson Associates' 1966 report to the New York State Library is titled *Feasibility of School and College Library Processing Through Public Library Systems in New York State.*[17] The state libraries of Hawaii, Georgia, and Ohio (to name a few) already process for school as well as for public libraries. The Crawfordsville (Indiana) Processing Center, the Library Services Center of Eastern Ohio, and the Weld County (Colorado) Library provide service to many schools. The Monterey County (California) Center is processing for a junior college in addition to its public library members. So long as the requirements for cataloging and classification are at a somewhat similar level there is no reason to believe that public library cooperative processing centers cannot also serve schools and junior colleges. The Lansing City (Michigan) Public Library has been successfully processing books for a junior college and for the city's school system for some years. Processing materials for more than one type of library can hardly be identified as a trend, but its feasibility has already been demonstrated.

Finally, the most significant question is whether or not there is truly a trend toward cooperative centralized processing among public li-

braries. Evidence of something similar to an explosion in this area since the mid-1950's has been presented, but such an explosion does not necessarily constitute a trend. Too many opposing factors present themselves (e.g., commercial and Federal processing) to permit a firm conclusion that cooperative processing is indeed a trend at present.

Federal funds have contributed significantly to the realization of the "cooperative" philosophy in technical services, but many problems still provide barriers to the development of cooperative processing. More than five dozen centers existed in 1966. Impressive as is this figure historically, it is not too impressive when balanced against the many small public libraries not included in any processing network, and against the eighteen states with no cooperative processing available. There has been and there remains a hesitation both within the profession and among lay leaders to understand the need for centralized processing. After all, the complexity of library interrelationships does make cooperation difficult. Local, state and Federal laws have been changed in many areas to allow for forms of cooperative library enterprise, but the new laws are often cumbersome and in political terms may be difficult to exploit. Tax bases are increasingly uneven and often inadequate. The spirit of local autonomy all too often takes precedence over professional philosophy and public need. Many areas still jealously guard their total independence as being more important than the benefits of a full range of library resources and services.

On another level, librarians face problems within the profession. There continues to be considerable disagreement over methods and approaches to the centralization of processing. Should the classification for one community be so tailored to that individual community that it cannot reasonably be handled at a distant center? Can the output of a center be accepted by a local library unit without substantial change? Is there any evidence that giving up local modifications for the sake of general economy is the better choice?

What happens when cataloging is so thoroughly handled at the center that the local library no longer is involved in the processing of books? Is there any real loss to the community when no one locally is directly concerned with the classification of materials? Practically, the answer in the long run may have to be no. Presently there seems to be no alternative. But the barrier of questioning and doubt still remains. A basic problem is how to make cooperative processing

centers truly effective. Cost, speed and customizing of cataloging and classification are aspects of this problem which have received a great deal of attention.

The few studies that we have do not support the assumption that cooperative cataloging is necessarily cheaper. In a recent report, Hendricks points out that "Although centralized processing proved to be more expensive . . . no members would advocate a return to each library processing its own books. . . . But if the cost of centralized processing can be kept to a reasonable figure, its definite advantages should justify the program. . . ."[18] The early Carhart study of Southwest Missouri Library Service, Inc.[19] did not prove that centralized processing is cheaper. In fact, several libraries not previously supporting quality cataloging found their costs substantially higher.

The time gap between the ordering and the receipt of materials is another continuing problem and, therefore, another argument against centralized processing. Obviously no processing center can process a book and speed it to the individual library faster than that library might accomplish the task alone. But this is a captious argument. The individual library might well do faster processing in "emergency" cases, but when joined to a processing center it can benefit in other ways from staff time saved and from improved processing. Shared personnel can create special problems, but often an individual library is sharing personnel when it previously had no one.

The arguments for cooperative and centralized processing are well-established. Increased efficiency is possible in a larger unit possessed of proper equipment, well-planned physical layout, and professional supervisory personnel. While centralized processing may cost more, other important values enter the picture. The cooperative unit is more likely to achieve less expensively the same standard of processing as that of the independent units. (Of course, this may not appear true if the center's personnel are paid at nationally competitive rates compared to the almost "volunteer" wages of many small libraries.) Professional assistance becomes available to libraries unable to obtain it on an independent basis. Another argument is that staff time freed through centralized processing will enable some member libraries to offer more reader services.

On a national scale, the observer can see diminished duplication of cataloging as cooperative processing increases. The shortage of personnel makes it impossible for every public library to hire competent

technical services librarians; at the same time, many libraries now do very little cataloging or none at all. Some would argue that uniformity of library catalogs is of potential service to the mobile public. Surely, however, none would argue that the quality of cataloging is not better served by practiced, specialized personnel.

While all of the public library cooperative processing centers are processing books, apparently none is dealing to any extent with the vast range of nonbook materials. The public library should, after all, be concerned with recorded ideas, not books alone. However, the current state of development of processing centers does not yet reflect this philosophy. The problems of processing recordings, for example, are slight. The problems of processing 8 mm. films, slides, or similar non-book materials are admittedly more complex. This author has not been able to identify a single public library cooperative processing center which processes all materials and fosters the integrated catalog long called for by the profession.

In the past a lot of effort has gone into pragmatic demonstrations that processing centers can process; much missionary spirit has been expended and a great deal of hortatory material has been published. Library philosophy has slowly evolved to embrace the system concept. We are now at the stage where we must have facts. At present it is not really possible to find an honest, accurate comparison of center costs and efficiency. Each survey and study in its turn notes the need for comparative data. Reports indicate the number of titles handled but not the level of cataloging and classification involved. What are the actual duties of seemingly comparable positions? What about comparative overhead costs? In many cases, we do not know the full range of equipment used by a center. Even general statements on costs per volume processed are suspect, since seldom have cost accounting techniques been uniformly applied. We need objective cost analysis and management study of operations.

The library field still faces professional disagreement on methods, and only too often we find professionally-originated delay in the implementation of the ideas of cooperative processing centers. More studies and research presenting concrete evidence should help to break down professional and political resistance.

Research Needed. Trends in cooperative public library processing have been noted. Are these healthy trends? Given a choice, what direction of development should processing centers select? For example, Project MARC was initiated to demonstrate the practicality

and to explore the problems of computer-produced cataloging information. The field of technical services in general has taken cognizance of the need for further investigation of the application of automation. Cooperating independent libraries can also purchase or rent machine time, and research is needed now to determine where and when the automation of cooperative processing might be practical.

To what extent can different kinds of libraries pool their processing needs? Several libraries have turned deliberately to commercial rather than cooperative processing. Other libraries need information on which to base a similar decision. At what point does the advantage, financially and in terms of good cataloging standards, necessitate the choice of one type of processing over another? What about costs? When does catalog card reproduction by a center, or the purchase of commercially-prepared cards, become more economical, or offer better quality, than production by individual libraries? When is it reasonable to set up a center?

What kind of training and education is needed by staff in a cooperative processing center? Are the tasks and assignments of cooperative processing personnel any different from those of personnel operating in a large library system? Technical services needs personnel research. We do not really know exactly what the professional and clerical tasks are. Since we do not know, library education may very well be teaching the wrong, or at least somewhat inappropriate, ideas. With cooperative processing centers assuming the tasks of member libraries, there is often little contact between the processing center personnel and the member libraries. With no one on the local staff immediately involved, the traditional questions, such as who is to interpret the catalog to the public, who is to make realistic suggestions for changes in subject headings, in classification, or in cross references, become more urgent. Does the processing center need to institute in-service training for member libraries? Does the lack of direct, public contact have any important influence on the processing procedure? We have guesses and emotional reactions. We need factual information.

The library profession is pragmatically oriented. The call for research has been long and steady, if not sufficiently loud. The area delineated by technical services lends itself to measurable research more easily than do public services, yet even here we find little substantial research. Librarians have devoted a lot of energy to the de-

velopment of processing center operations, but have devoted less effort to evaluating and comparing centers, or to considering the values of alternate means of processing. In addition to basic research in technical services in general, as well as in cataloging and classification, processing centers would benefit from studies concerning the most effective methods of handling non-book materials. Much of the present knowledge of processing audio-visual materials, for example, comes from the practical experience of school librarians, and much of this experience is know-how neither analyzed nor evaluated. (The current move back to color-coded catalog cards is but one frightening example.) Each of the problems facing cooperative processing centers needs research for adequate solution.

Finally, centralized processing needs continual appraisal both on the management level and on the theoretical level. Basically, how can the cooperative processing center be more effective? Research, both political and sociological, is needed. Some authorities in political science have suggested that the state government will become an increasingly strong source of governmental leadership in the years ahead. If this is true, the implications for library systems, and particularly for cooperative networks, are obvious. We need further research to determine if this is true, and if so, just what the implications for libraries may be.

No one seems to have asked the question as to whether or not the concept of "cooperative" processing is a healthy one. In our rush to process cooperatively, are we actually establishing barriers to the future development of full, integrated library systems? Will this situation parallel Carnegie's sponsorship of many public library buildings in communities which then as a consequence never had to face up to the full responsibility of library support? Just as a community has often first awakened to the full responsibilities of library support when it has replaced its old Carnegie building, so librarians some years from now may be faced with the difficulty of selling administrative centralization on a large, even national, scale, to leaders used to the comparative laissez faire of cooperative ventures. If public libraries are to increase the effectiveness of their role in shaping the future, their leadership must fully investigate every aspect of making recorded information available. Such an investigation of cooperative processing centers could reveal that they are a temporary expedient only.

Bibliographical Note

This chapter has attempted to summarize the major aspects of cooperative processing for independent public libraries. Although information about these centers is still difficult to obtain, several authors have made important contributions which may be considered milestones in the literature of cooperative processing. Further information of some importance is available in these key materials.

In "Regional Processing for Public Libraries, A Survey,"[20] Dorothy Bendix characterizes and describes existing processing centers and notes the beginning of practical interest in the concept. Frances Dukes Carhart's *Southwest Missouri Library Service, Inc.*[19] presents a detailed picture of one of the early, influential processing centers. An extensive bibliography by Mary Hanley, *Centralized Processing, Recent Trends and Current Status; A Review and Synthesis of the Literature,*[21] organizes the major material on centralized as well as cooperative processing by states and includes both a bibliographic essay and a general bibliography.

Mary Lee Bundy's *Public Library Processing Centers: A Report of a Nationwide Survey*[22] describes the "explosion period" in the development of processing centers. Much of this material is available nowhere else.

James R. Hunt's "The Historical Development of Processing Centers in the United States"[4] is still the basic history, and it offers the first attempt at listing regional processing centers.

"Guidelines for Centralized Technical Services"[5] is a practical guide for the administrator, trustee, or technical services director considering or planning a cooperative processing center. Nelson Associates' *Centralized Processing for the Public Libraries of New York State*[24] is a lengthy survey with recommendations. The findings and recommendations should serve as general guidelines for any large area considering the feasibility of centralized processing for a large number of public libraries of all sizes. In *Comparative Costs of Book Processing in a Processing Center and in Five Individual Libraries*[23] Donald D. Hendricks has made the most successful analysis to date of the quality and costs of cooperative processing centers. R. T. S. D.'s Regional Processing Committee has probably made the most complete listing of processing centers in its 1966 survey[12] (available in mimeograph form from ALA). A corrected version with interpretation is planned for publication in 1967.

What appears to be the most thorough study of characteristics,

operations, programs, and attitudes was summarized in Sarah K. Vann's "Southeastern Pennsylvania Processing Center Feasibility Study: A Summary."[13]

The current literature concerning cooperative processing centers, the areas of current research, and the growth in size and number of cooperative processing centers emphasize the importance of cooperative processing to the field today.

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